

# **Chronic Truancy & Social Bonding :**

## **Role of Schools**

**IATDP**

2008

**Carolyn Gentle-Genitty, PhD**

Indiana University School of Social Work

902 West New York Street, ES 4145

[cgentleg@iupui.edu](mailto:cgentleg@iupui.edu)

# **Overview of Presentation**

**Understanding our past: School experiences**

**Ascertaining what's missing**

**Brief overview of research**

**Open discussion**

**Closing**

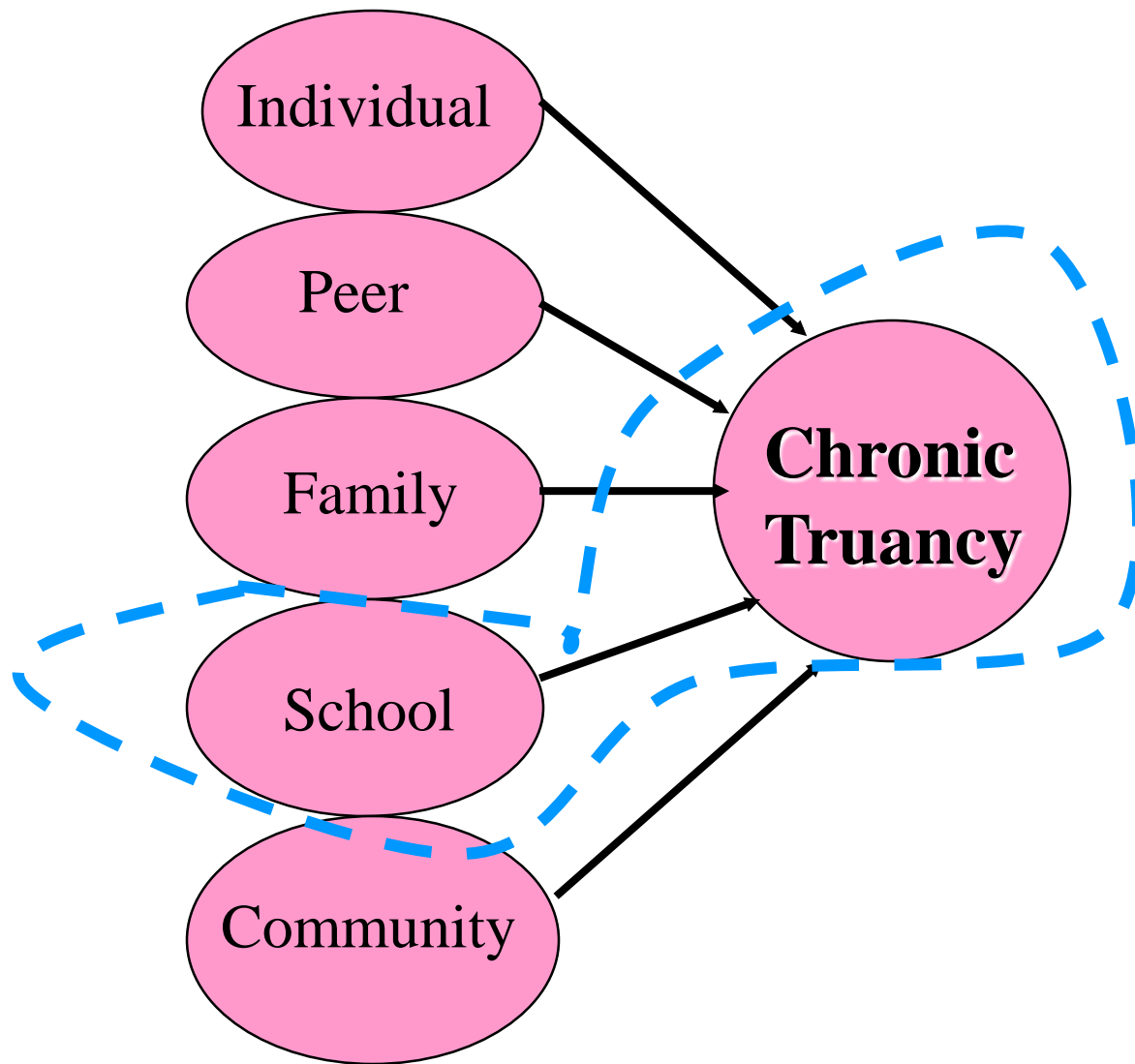
# Open Discussion Of School Experiences

## Think-Pair-Share

- Think about your school experiences (kids)
- Pair up with 2 other persons in the group and discuss
- Discuss with larger group

## Common Themes





Indiana Public School Commissioner said,

**“Our allegiance should go to the kids who want to be there and not the kids who don’t want to learn” (Dunlop, 1996, p. 3).**

2004 national conference on truancy U.S. Dept. Justice & Education

- Complex problem
- Not focus on attendance alone,
- Must meet "three A's"—school **Attendance, Attachment, and Achievement.**



- ❑ One of the top **5** major school problems
- ❑ **1 in every 100** students at-risk of truancy.
- ❑ Age 14-16 it is **1 in every 10**
- ❑ Of every **10** Black men in prison in 2004, **6** were school dropouts

## Children unaccounted for in school system

- ❑ **Texas** **140,000** students to truancy per year
- ❑ **New York City**, daily average of **150,000** students
- ❑ **Los Angeles** loses track of over **62,000** students daily
- ❑ **Detroit** truancy investigation rate of over **66,440** per yr
- ❑ **Milwaukee** lose track of **4,000** students per day
- ❑ **Philadelphia** loses track of **2,500** students per day

27 states = **1,572,179** unaccounted children in the US as of 2006

(Center for School Improvement Policy Studies Boise State University)

# Preparing to Study Chronic Truancy

## *1 = Cause* *Causes of Truancy*

1. School-Related Incidents  
(Richart, et al. 2003)
2. Zero Tolerance Policies  
(Richart, 2001)
3. Inadequacies of the School System  
(Kozol, 2005)
4. Student Engagement not Primary Responsibility  
(George & Alexander, 1993).
5. Inability to meet Student Needs  
(DeMedio, 1991)
6. Little focus on School Context  
(Brundrett, 2004)
7. Not engaging Students @ behavioral, cognitive, & emotional levels  
(Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).



# Preparing to Study Chronic Truancy

## 2 = Context

*Where?, Why?, When?, Who?*

### ***Where?***

- In middle school and earlier (Roderick, 2003)

### ***Why?***

- Students not engaged in school
- Only academic needs – not psychological/social
- Being pre-disposed to violence (Dunlop, 1996)
- Other reasons as explored in the causes

### ***When?***

- After leaving supported elementary schools to go fragmented middle schools (Schulenberg et al., 2004)

### ***Who?***

- Primarily children in public schools
- Mainly Blacks & Hispanics (Clark, 1994)
- Gifted students from ‘dumbed-down’ curriculum (Yecke, 2003)

# *Current Studies*

- ❑ Many studies Have used survey designs

To enhance

- ❖ Replication,
- ❖ Consistency, &
- ❖ Accuracy

- ❑ Hough (2003) : extensive review of middle school literature in 1991-2002:

1. Of over **3,717 studies** carried out in middle schools, **only 1/3 were quantitative**,
2. None were replications of previous studies,
3. **Only 4 examined middle schools' climate and environment** on students' bond to school and achievement (Backes, Ralston, & Ingwalson (1999); Felner et al. (1997); Lee & Smith (1993); Mertens, et al. (1998).
4. "One can count on one hand those that identified programs, policies, and practices related to **student outcomes** that can be generalized" (p.11).

# Preparing to Study Chronic Truancy

## 4 = Characters

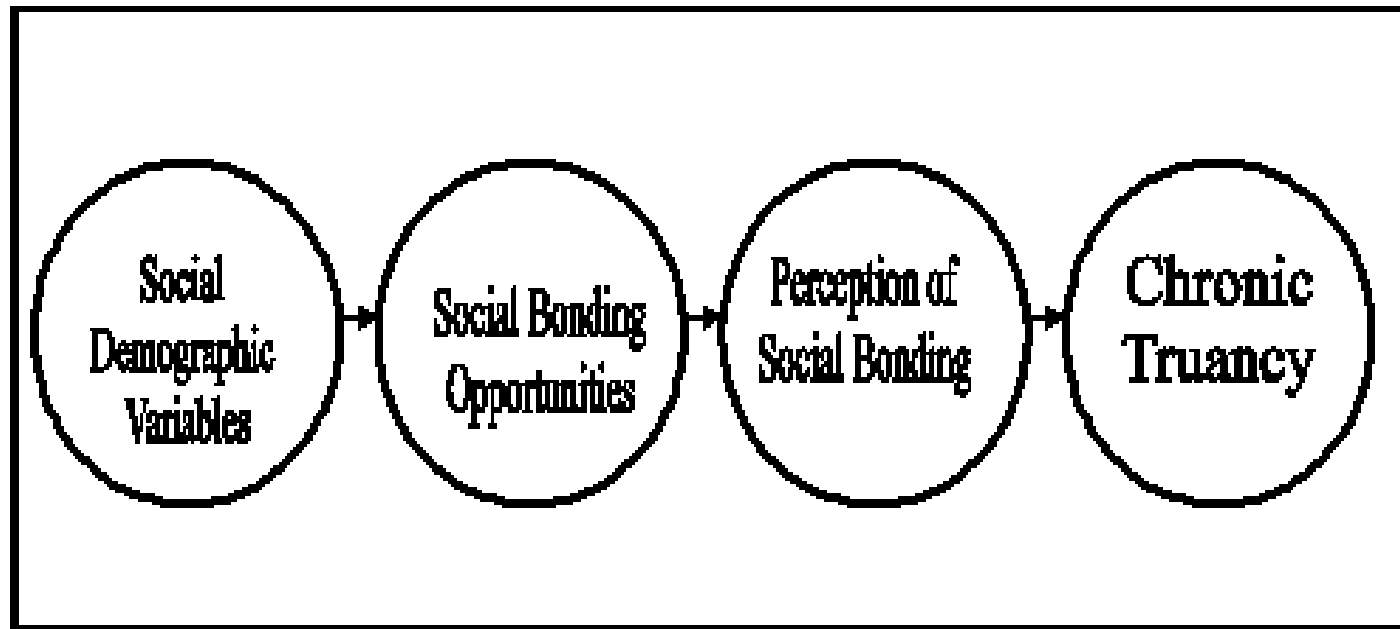
### *Selected list of Key Authors/Researchers*

- ☐ **Abbott & Brekinridge (1917):** Truancy & Non-Attendance
- ☐ **Bonikowske (1987):** Truancy: Prelude to Dropping-out
- ☐ **Cassidy & Bates (2005):** Drop-outs and Push-outs
- ☐ **Colorado Foundation (2001/2002):** Overview of Truancy and Cost of Truancy Reduction
- ☐ **Fine (1991):** Framing Dropouts
- ☐ **Garry (1996):** Truancy: First step to a Lifetime of Problems
- ☐ **Hersov & Berg (Eds.) (1980):** Truancy and School Refusal
- ☐ **OJJDP (2006):** Chronic Truancy Initiatives
- ☐ **Reid (1999/2000):** Truancy and Tacking Truancy
- ☐ **Roderick (1993):** The path to Dropping Out

## Polk and Schafer (1972)

❑ if it is “the way institutions relate to young people, and ... [their contributions to the] process that creates youthful deviance, then it is these institutions that must be corrected, not the young who are its casualties” (p.7).

# Theoretical Framework





# Theory

## *Social Control Theory*

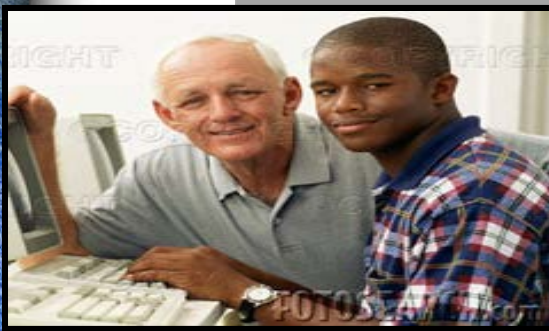
Hirschi (1969)

- ❑ Major theory in understanding delinquent behaviors.
- ❑ Examine connections to people in the creation of a relationship and important factors in delinquency
- ❑ Considered **first theories to examine school social bond** as a primary predictor of delinquency

### 4 Elements of Social Bond

1. Attachment
2. Commitment
3. Involvement
4. Belief

- ❑ **Higher presence of four elements, the higher the level of social bonding**





**Attachment:**  
Affection and sensitivity  
to others

**Commitment:**  
Investment in  
conventional society or  
stake in conformity

**Hirschi's  
Elements of  
Social Bond**

**Involvement:**  
Being busy, restricted  
opportunities for  
delinquency

**Belief:**  
Degree to which person  
thinks they should obey  
the law

# Survey Instrument

&

IDOE

## Survey Instrument

1. Attempted to find an appropriate scale
2. Developed scale using general constructs of Social Control Theory and literature

### 81-item, five part survey instrument

1. Section A (*School Demographics*) **11 close-ended questions w/ radio buttons**, drop down menu choices & interval/ratio level questions; (**Data from IDOE**)
2. Section B (*Attendance*) **5 open/close-ended questions**, fill-in-the-blanks, & choice questions;
3. Section C (*Opportunities for Social Bonding*) **40 Likert scaled questions** w/ response choices ranging from 1= Strongly Agree (SA) to 5 = Strongly Disagree (SD);
4. Section D (*Perception of Student Social Bonding*) Part I had **4 Likert scale questions** & Part II had **16 Likert scaled questions**; with response choices ranging from 10% to 100%;
5. Section E (*General School Perceptions*) **5** - had a **mixture of open-ended, Likert scaled**, rank ordered, and fill-in-the-blank questions.

# Research Questions

## *Research Questions*

Q1:

- ☐ What is the extent of the relationship between **schools' social bonding opportunities** and **principals' perceptions** of students' social bonding?

Q2:

- ☐ What is the extent of the relationship between social bonding **opportunities** and **rates of chronic truancy** and how the relationship is affected when controlling for **selected demographics**?

Q3:

- ☐ What is the extent of the relationship between **principals' perceptions** of social bonding and **rates of chronic truancy** and how is the relationship affected when controlling for **selected demographics**?

Q4:

- ☐ What is the relationship between social bonding **opportunities**, **perception of social bonding**, and **rates of chronic truancy** in middle school and how is the relationship affected when controlling for **selected demographics**?

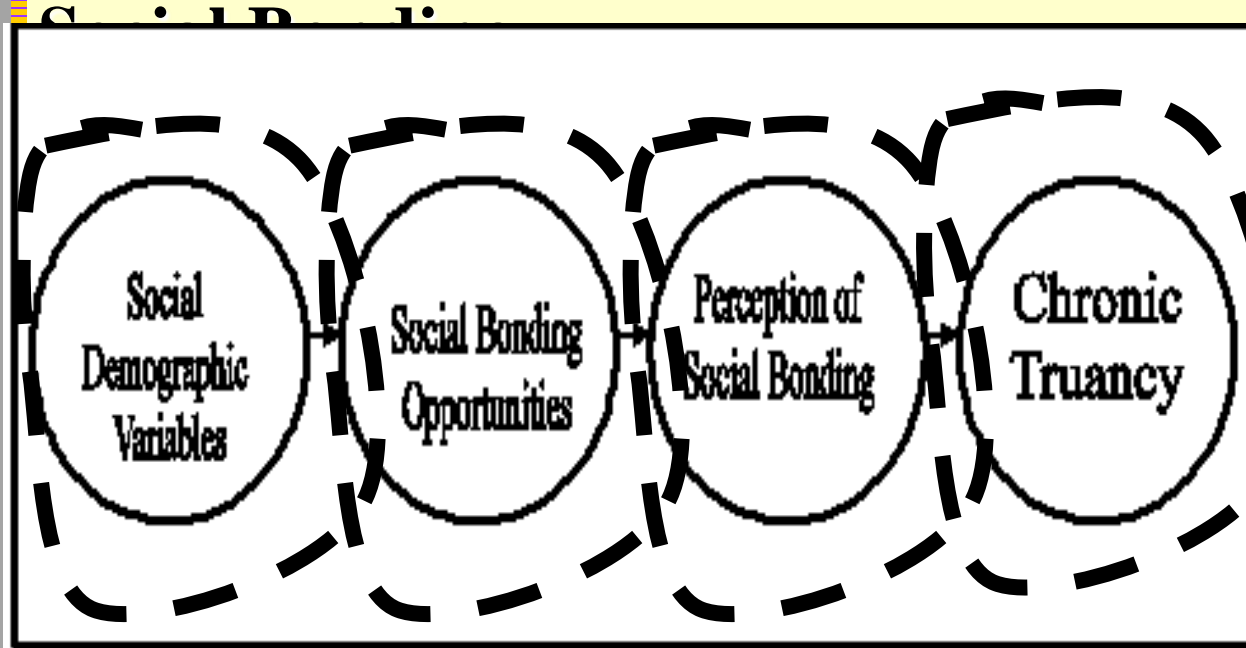
# Measurement of Variables

## Chronic Truancy (10+ unexcused absences in 1yr)

*Rates of Chronic Truancy (measured)*

IDOE 06-07 Annual Performance Reports

$\# \div \text{enrollments} = \text{rates}$



## Selected Demographics (IDOE)

#Suspended Students

#Dropout Students

- raw numbers from dataset converted into percentages and the MeanSub used give a more meaningful comparison of the data.
  - MEANSuspended%
  - MEANDropout%

## **Schools' Social Bonding Opportunities**

### **Policies and Practices**

Factor scores derived from  
(Items #17-76)

*Sample item with response choices*

**“Provide someone for students to turn to in time of need”**

**SA    A    N    D    SD**

### **Principals' Perceptions of Students' Social Bonding (items #57- 60)**

*Sample item with response choices*

**“What % of your students do you believe show ... affection  
and sensitivity to others in the school?”**

**10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%**



# Study Sample

- ☐ **428** schools invited based on those listed on IDOE website as of March 2007
- ☐ **45** cases were dropped for various reasons
  - ☐ 21 returned as **undeliverable** emails,
  - ☐ 21 **failed** to go to their respective respondents due to them being out of office, no longer employed at location, or moved,
  - ☐ 3 were **duplications in the data set**, and
- ☐ **144** Responded (45 Private & 99 Public schools)
- ☐ **Of the 45 Private Schools**
  - ☐ Less than **25% of their responses were complete.** With comments such as:
    1. “To be frank, we **do not experience truancy**. It may be because parents are fully involved and paying tuition. Also, students seem to enjoy attending school.”
    2. “We **do not have any problem with truancy** at our school.”

Private schools were removed from the sample resulting in **study sample of 99 public middle schools**

**33% Response Rate** (302 public schools invited)



# School Demographics

## Location

- ☐ 57% **Rural**
- ☐ 23% **Urban**
- ☐ 19% **Suburban**

*(similar to the population from which the sample was derived)*

## School size

- ☐ 10 – 1,000 students

## Race

- ☐ Over 85% white

## Mean Class Size

- ☐ 24

## Multiple Questions Measured Constructs of Social Bond

<b>Attachment</b>  <i>8 questions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide someone for students to turn to in time of need</li> <li>2. Provide socialization opportunities with other students</li> <li>3. Provide activities that foster a desire to stay in school</li> <li>4. Provide opportunities for good role models for students</li> <li>5. Provide student interaction opportunities with role models.</li> <li>6. Provide opportunities for students to build school pride.</li> <li>7. Provide a safe environment to build positive relationships</li> <li>8. Generally request and use student input</li> </ol>
<b>Commitment</b>  <i>10 questions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage students to come to school</li> <li>2. Use more in-school rather than out-of-school punishment options</li> <li>3. Offer extended extracurricular opportunities for academically at-risk students</li> <li>4. Offer on-going and seasonal extracurricular activities</li> <li>5. Offer various community-linked and school campaigns to encourage in and out of school</li> <li>6. Offer opportunities for student participation</li> <li>7. Provide opportunities for student leadership</li> <li>8. Encourage students to have a stake in their education</li> <li>9. Foster and value students' creativity</li> <li>10. Reward students for following school rules and policies</li> </ol>
<b>Involvement</b>  <i>7 questions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage students to keep busy under adult supervision</li> <li>2. Encourage parents to participate in their child's learning</li> <li>3. Encourage teachers to spend time with students at-risk</li> <li>4. Encourage student participation in school decision-making</li> <li>5. Encourage student participation in extracurricular activities</li> <li>6. Encourage student participation in student governance</li> <li>7. Create opportunities for all students to get involved</li> </ol>
<b>Belief</b>  <i>9 questions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our school structure and policies are perceived to be generally fair and equal</li> <li>2. Our school structure and policies show the value for remaining in school</li> <li>3. Our school structure and policies encourage respect for teachers and authority</li> <li>4. Our school structure and policies encourage students to believe teachers are basically good</li> <li>5. Our school policies have clear written rules and related consequences</li> <li>6. Our school structure and policies encourage consistent enforcement of school rules</li> <li>7. Our school structure and policies encourage students to advance their education</li> <li>8. Our school structure and policies encourage students' belief in themselves</li> <li>9. Our school structure and policies generally enforce that the law should be obeyed</li> </ol>

## *Index Reliabilities and Means for Social Bond Measures*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<b>O1 – Reward &amp; Encouragement to stay in School</b>	86	-1.80	.502	.800
<b>O2 – Participation in School decision-making</b>	86	-2.47	.734	.837
<b>O3 – Teachers &amp; Peers are Good</b>	86	-1.72	.621	.963
<b>O4 – Involvement in School</b>	86	-1.75	.499	.674
<b>O5 – Expression and Pride</b>	86	-1.86	.538	.634
<b>O6 – Value Education</b>	86	-1.61	.489	.694
<b>O7 – Create Attachment</b>	86	-1.55	.496	.697
<b>O8 – Policy Enforcement</b>	86	-1.43	.479	.658

Scale: (1= SA to 5 = SD). Higher score = better schools' social bonding opportunities

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<b>P1 – Belief &amp; Value of Education</b>	83	8.33	.788	.863
<b>P2 – Stakes in Education</b>	83	7.87	1.056	.767
<b>P3 – Involvement in Pro-social Activities</b>	83	6.58	1.410	.824
<b>P4 – Non-Participation in Unconventional Activities</b>	83	8.86	1.075	.837
<b>P5 – Commitment to Participate in Productive Activities</b>	83	7.28	1.503	.851

Scale: (1=10% to 10=100%). Higher score = greater principals' perception of students' social bond to school.

# Regression

- ❑ To measure the extent of the relationship among schools' social bonding **opportunities**, principals' **perceptions** of students' social bonding, and rates of **chronic truancy**, a model of best fit was found

Variables Included	Standardized Coefficients	Sig. Level	Tolerance	Eigenvalue	R <sup>2</sup>
O1 – Reward & Encouragement to stay in School	-.197	.159	.600	.030	<b>.118</b>
O5 – Expression and Pride	.035	.809	.563	.020	
O7 – Create Attachment	-.142	.275	.690	.004	
P1 – Belief & Value of Education	-.008	.948	.692	<b>.121</b>	
P3 – Involvement in Pro-social Activities	-.265	.035	.756	.047	

Variables Included	Standardized Coefficients	Sig. Level	Tolerance	Eigenvalue	R <sup>2</sup>
O1 – Reward & Encouragement to Stay in School	-.336	.022	.542	<b>.743</b>	<b>.163</b>
O5 – Expression and Pride	.195	.178	.539	.334	
O7 – Create Attachment	-.117	.368	.665	.117	
P1 – Belief & Value of Education	-.020	.876	.690	.003	
P3 – Involvement in Pro-social Activities	-.034	.796	.645	.046	
SMEAN Dropout Percent	.266	.020	.893	.029	
SMEAN Suspended Percent	.187	.123	.771	.015	



# General Study Findings

## (Descriptive)

### Does Well

- ❑ Building opportunities for attachment and involvement in their school

Thematic Responses based on Measures of Social Bond	Total % from each rank
<u>Opportunities for Attachment</u> “great student-ratio, mentoring,, provide role models, kind teachers, and safe environment”	50
<u>Opportunities for Involvement</u> <u>(attendance)</u> <i>“activities, strong extracurricular programs, sporting events, group gatherings, and field trips”</i>	34
Opportunities for Belief ( <i>rewards etc.</i> )	9
Opportunities for Commitment ( <i>membership</i> )	7

# General Study Findings Cont'd (Descriptive)

## Areas for Improvement to build students' social bond

Categories	Valid % per Rank
<b>Relationship Building</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual meetings,</li> <li>• Survey of student interest,</li> <li>• Reaching all kids,</li> <li>• More opportunities to get involved,</li> <li>• Reaching out to disengaged students more deliberately,</li> <li>• Time with staff, and</li> <li>• Be more sensitive to student perception of fairness and equity among others.</li> </ul>	50
<b>Life Skill Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching respect</li> <li>• Student empowerment</li> <li>• Socialization skills</li> </ul>	12
<b>School Environment Enhancements</b>	10
<b>More Parent Involvement</b>	9
<b>More Teacher Involvement</b>	7
<b>Academic Related Programs</b>	7
<b>Other</b>	5



# General Study Findings Cont'd (Descriptive)

## Definition of Chronic Truancy

- ☐ (65%) of schools were using 10 or less absences as their definition of chronic truancy.
- ☐ Average was 8 days

Percent of schools (N=99)	Numerical # of Absences reported to determine truancy
39	0-5
26	6-10
9	11-14
1	15-20
1	Other/No definition
24	Used Narrative definition

### Narrative Comments:

1. Being absent and neither the parent or school is aware of, or the reason for the absence.
2. Being somewhere other than directed by school personnel
3. Failure to report to assigned classes or absences that occur without the knowledge.

## Action taken after Certain # of Absences

Absences	Most Often	Somewhat Often	Least Often
1-3	Parent Notification = <b>62%</b>	Nothing = 19%	Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference call, talk) = 16%
4-6	Parent Notification with warning = <b>84%</b>	Student Discipline (make-up time and work, in-school suspension) = 12%	Nothing = 2%
7-9	Parent Notification (with description of court action and formal policies) = <b>65%</b>	Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference, talk) = 34%	<i>None reported</i>
10+	<b>Outside Assistance (from police, prosecutor, attendance officers, court etc.) = 47%</b>	Parent Notification (court action, formal policies, mandatory conferences etc.) = 30%	Student Discipline (expelled, out of school suspension, loss of credit etc.) = 22%

# General Study Findings

## Cont'd

### (Descriptive)

# Study Findings

## (Explanatory)

### Research Question 1

## **RQ1: Schools' SB Opportunities + Principals' Perception of Students' SB**

### **Method**

- Used Second Order Factor Analysis
- Correlation

### **Result**

- ( $r=.452$ ,  $p=< .01$ ).
- Moderate, positive, and significant relationship between **Schools' SB Opportunities + Principals' Perception of Students' SB**

# Study Findings

## Research Question 2

### RQ2: Opportunities + *Intruancy*

#### Method

- Correlation analysis with 8 Opportunity factor indices and *Intruancy*

#### Result

Opportunities	N	Correlation	Sig. Level
<b>Opportunities1 – Reward &amp; Encouragement to Stay in School</b>	86	<b>.190</b>	<b>.079</b>
Opportunities2 – Participating in School Decision-Making	86	.021	.848
Opportunities3 – Teachers & Peers are Basically Good	86	.079	.471
Opportunities4 – Involvement in School	86	-.062	.573
<b>Opportunities5 – Expression and Pride</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>.096</b>	<b>.377</b>
Opportunities6 – Value in Education	86	-.027	.805
<b>Opportunities7 – Create Attachment</b>	86	<b>.171</b>	<b>.112</b>
Opportunities8 – Policy Enforcement	86	.044	.686

**Weak to no relationship** – As some opportunities increase rates of chronic truancy will increase.



# Study Findings

## Research Question 3

### RQ3: Perception + *Intruancy*

#### Method

- Correlation analysis with 5 Perception factor indices and *Intruancy*

#### Results

Perception	N	Correlation	Sig. Level
Perception1 – Belief & Value of Education	83	-.122	.265
Perception2 – Stakes in Education	83	-.023	.839
Perception3 – Involvement in Unconventional Activities	83	-.205	.062
Perception4 – Non-Participating in Unconventional Activities	83	-.045	.684
Perception5 – Commitment to Participate in Productive Activities	83	-.041	.712

The **lower** principals' perceptions of students' social bonding in their school, the **higher** the rates of chronic truancy. **Weak to no relationship**

# Study Findings

## Research Question 4

### RQ4: Opportunities + Perceptions + Intruanacy

#### Method

- Model of best fit found (**sig. @ .05 level**)
  - Factors of .10 higher included (**O1, O5, O7, P1, & P3**)
  - All entered in Standard multiple Regression
- With dependent variable - *Intruancy*

#### Results

- ☐ **12% of** variance accounted for in rates of chronic truancy.
- ☐ Controlling for demographic (SMEAN Suspended% & SMEAN dropout%) = **(16%)**.
- ☐ As schools' social bonding opportunities and principals' perceptions of students' social **bonding increased**, rates of chronic truancy **decreased**.
- ☐ \*When schools have **high rates of Black and Hispanic students**, they also had **high rates** of chronic truancy.
- ☐ \* When schools' social bonding **opportunities increase**, rates of chronic truancy **increase** when controlling for **Black and Hispanic percentages** in the school



**True social bonding  
takes place after the lecture**



**Questions & Remarks**